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ABSTRACT

Since the passage of the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, inclusion of all students with disabilities in accountability systems has been mandatory. By 2001, school personnel began to understand that alternate assessment needed to focus on students' performance on state standards and nearly all states had created either links from functional skills to state standards or extensions of state standards. The purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of how state education agency personnel are addressing alternate assessments. Multiple methods were used to obtain copies of state alternate assessment materials, and such materials were obtained from 42 states. Findings show that a wide variety of methods are being used for implementing and scoring alternate assessments. In the majority of states, assessments are either linked back to the state standards or standards are extended to the alternate assessments. Academic domains are measured in most states; however, in 28% of states only functional skills are measured, or insufficient information was provided to determine what was being measured. In almost all states, some form of rubric was used to measure student progress, typically mastery or progress (69%) or level of independence (60%). (Contains 4 tables, 8 figures, and 22 references.) (Author/SLD)

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RUNNING HEAD: Alternate Assessment

ED 463 303

How States Define Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

Since the passage of the 1997 amendments of IDEA, inclusion of all students with disabilities in accountability systems has been mandatory. By 2001 school personnel began to understand that alternate assessment needed to focus on students' performance on state standards and nearly all states had created either links from functional skills to state standards or extensions of state standards. The purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of how state education agency personnel are addressing alternate assessments. We found that a wide variety of methods are being used for implementing and scoring alternate assessments. In the majority of states, assessments are either linked back to the state standards or standards are extended to the alternate assessments. Academic domains are measured in most states; however, in 28% of states only functional skills are measured or insufficient information was provided to determine what was being measured. In almost all states, some form of rubric was used to measure student progress, typically mastery or progress (69%) or level of independence (60%).

How States Define Alternate Assessments for Students With Disabilities

In the past, students with moderate or severe disabilities were often exempted from the large-scale assessments that were a key component of school reform. In the mid-1990s, the National Center for Education Outcomes (NCEO) drew attention to this practice noting that students not included in accountability systems could easily be bypassed in efforts to measure educational progress (Erickson, Thurlow, & Thor, 1995). Since the passage of the 1997 amendments of IDEA, inclusion of all students with disabilities in accountability systems has been mandatory. Students who are unable to participate in large-scale assessments with accommodations must be given an alternate assessment. IDEA 1997 also required that all students have access to the general curriculum. At this same time, Title I Guidance on Standards, Assessments, and Accountability that Supplements the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (as Amended by the Improving America's School Act of 1994, P.L. 103-382, 1997) emphasized that these assessments were related to the same standards used for all students: "It is important that standards for students with disabilities be included in these assessments because they are expected to meet the same standards as other students." (II. Assessments, Questions #42, p. 10 of 16. As cited in Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 2001, p. 21).

When IDEA 1997 was passed only one state, Kentucky, had developed alternate assessment. The rest of the country had to create new procedures quickly. Some states put in place alternate assessments based on preexisting resources on functional curriculum. The priority for students with severe disabilities to live and work in the community led to widespread adoption of curriculum related to functioning in everyday life in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Numerous resources emerged to help educators plan for students with severe disabilities using a functional curriculum approach (Browder, 1987; Falvey, 1989; Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 1989;

Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1993; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1987). In 1999, 16 states had developed alternate assessments based on functional skills with no link to state standards. By 2001, state education agency personnel began to understand that alternate assessment needed to focus on students' performance on state standards and nearly all states had created either links from functional skills to state standards or extensions of their state standards.

Ford, Davern, and Schnorr (2001) noted that states tended to use one of two approaches to extend these standards. The first was to simplify the regular standard to find something (anything!) that a student with severe disabilities could do. The result was lists of specific skills that might be targeted for participation in a particular activity, but that were not necessarily high priority outcomes. For example, these simplified standards might be to "touch a relief map" or "match a picture of the local mayor to the city." A second approach was to redefine the state standard to be a functional skill. The impact of this approach was that the relationship between the skill and standard was sometimes difficult to justify. For example, a social studies standard to develop historical perspective might be extended as "use a personal calendar." A third alternative, promoted by Ford et al. (2001) was to extend standards through the use of foundational skills such as "Enjoys literature; reads books/materials for a variety of purposes." Teachers would then choose the skills to be performance outcomes for students.

One of the differences to the extension of standards is the level of specificity provided in the state's guide. In simplifying a skill or using functional skills, the state may be trying to offer an example of a teachable skill. This may be especially important in an era of teacher shortages when many entry level teachers will need to conduct the alternate assessment and may find broad standards not applicable to their students. In contrast a broad example may leave more latitude for meaningful, individual planning.

One of the challenges for curriculum planning for a student with severe disabilities is that curriculum must be individualized (Knowlton, 1998). Most of the curriculum guides that emerged in the 1980s included a process for identifying priority skills for the IEP (cf Ford et al. 1989; Giangreco et al. 1993). Functional curriculum guides were typically viewed as a "catalog" from which to select skills, versus the scope and sequence of skills all students would learn (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1987). Recent literature on creating access to the general curriculum has reemphasized the theme of using the IEP process to define the student's curriculum. Wehmeyer, Lattin, and Agran (2001) propose using the IEP as a decision-making process to enable teams to address how the student's formal curriculum is determined. In extending standards to create alternate assessments, states had to struggle with this tension between defining an outcome for all students and offering a "catalog" of skills from which teachers could select relevant targets. Wehmeyer et al. (2001) cautioned that focusing on state standards does not mean *only* teaching general curriculum, but that students continue to need instruction related to their life skill and transition needs. In extending standards, states had to struggle with how much to define access to general academic curriculum (fit all students in existing standards) versus introducing to their state additional functional standards to be considered.

Besides the NCEO's report on state outcomes (Thompson & Thurlow, 2001) that describes how many functional skills or extended standards are being used and the formats being used for the alternate assessments, no research exists on the curriculum being tested in the federally mandated alternate assessment systems. The purpose of this study was to provide a deeper understanding of how alternate assessments are being linked to state standards, and how alternate assessments are being scored. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How are states' alternate assessments aligning performance indicators to standards?

2. What skills and knowledge are being measured with alternate assessment systems?
3. How are alternate assessment scores calculated?

Method

Information from all 50 states and the District of Columbia was examined to identify the skills and knowledge being measured by alternate assessments. The following sections describe document collection and analysis methods.

Document Collection

Multiple methods were used to obtain copies of state alternate assessment materials. Document collection started in June 2001 and was completed in November 2001. First, states that attended a pre-conference seminar on alternate assessment at the Council of Chief State School Officers National Conference on Large-Scale Assessment in Houston in June 2001 were asked to provide a copy of their alternate assessment materials. Eleven states provided their manual or handouts as a result of this request at the conference. For the remaining 40 states, a web-based search was conducted. This process obtained information for an additional 27 states. If the website provided insufficient information concerning the state alternate assessment system, an email was sent to the contact individual listed on the web site. In response to our request four additional states sent manuals in the mail. For those states lacking information, the regional resource centers were contacted; however, no additional information was obtained using this procedure.

Alternate assessment information was obtained from a total of 42 states and used in this study. The date listed on the alternate assessment information ranged from early 1999 to fall, 2001. Information from five states did not specify the publication date.

Document Analyses

Before the analyses began, researchers read the states' documents to familiarize themselves with each of the states' alternate assessment systems. Preference was given to alternate assessment manuals/guidelines, but other sources of information were used as well. A total of 42 manuals/guidelines were reviewed. When information could not be found in a manual/guideline or the state did not have a manual/guideline available, other documents were reviewed, including seven informational documents, two assessment booklets, two sets of handouts, and one on-line power-point presentation.

The analysis of each state's alternate assessment began with an *emic* perspective in which researchers retained individual states' language for describing the features of their alternate assessment systems. Researchers shifted to an *etic* perspective in order to develop common categories for the purpose of describing commonalities and differences among the states' alternate assessment system (Creswell, 2002). One researcher developed a system for consistently diagramming each state's alternate assessment system. A team of six researchers then reviewed preliminary versions of 42 diagrams for clarity and consistency of representation.

Results

The results are presented in order of the research questions: (a) How are states' alternate assessments aligning performance indicators to standards? (b) What skills and knowledge are being measured with alternate assessment systems? (c) How are alternate assessment scores calculated? Each set of outcomes contributes to the emerging knowledge base on alternate assessment.

Alignment of States' Alternate Assessment to Performance Indicators

Each state's alternate assessment system was first considered according to the content areas (i.e., domain) specified by the states and the layers (or levels) used to link areas to student performance. Semantic differences were the first indication of the wide variation in states' systems. In examining the most specific level of assessment items, which were typically individual skills or behaviors, 12 states (29%) included the word "performance" as a descriptor (e.g., performance indicators, performance descriptors, performance standards). Ten states (24%) referred to these items as "skills" (e.g., access skills, core skills). Seven states (17%) referred to these items as "standards" or "benchmarks." Twenty-four (57%) of the states provided the lowest level as suggested skills, rather than required skills to be taught. Nine states (21%) used the adjective "example," "sample," or "idea" to describe the skill-level items in their alternate assessments.[1]

In 41 of 42 states, one alternate assessment system is used for all students; one state has two separate alternate assessment systems. We represented the process by which state general education standards were linked to the performance indicators using a schematic diagram. The number of layers used to link the state standards to the performance indicators ranged from two (see Figure 1) to seven (see Figure 2); the median number of layers was 5. The states with two layers began with functional categories that included functional academics, and led directly to sample objectives. The state with seven layers started with three categories based on the student's level of disability (mild, moderate, or severe) that lead to "specified expectations," "clarifications," "performance requirements," "performance contexts," "critical context variables," and "learner characteristics and educational needs" for each level.

[1] In the remainder of this paper we refer to the lowest level skill items as "performance indicators," unless describing a specific state's alternate assessment system.

Most states with the typical number of levels (*Mo* = 5) began with general curriculum academic content areas (see Figure 3), but several others began with functional content areas (see Figure 4). As shown in Figure 3, each content area of the alternate assessment has specified "content standards," then "performance standards," "alternate performance indicators," and "sample performance activities." As displayed in Figure 4, another state that began with five functional "domains" then specified "components" of those domains, which then linked to "standards" that included both functional and general curriculum, followed by "key concepts" and "performance indicators."

In 26 states (62%), general curriculum standards were extended to the alternate assessment standards. An example of an extended curriculum alignment is displayed in Figure 5. Eight states (19%) linked functional standards back to the general curriculum (see Figure 6). Personnel in six states developed an alternate assessment alignment that included both extended general curriculum standards and functional categories (see Figure 7). Four states (10%) developed functional standards parallel to the general education standards (see Figure 8). The state with two separate alternate assessment systems included one that extended the state's standards and another that featured only functional skills.

A comparison of the number of different content areas included at the top layer of each state's alternate assessment system yielded a range from as few as two areas (6 states) to as many as ten areas (2 states), with a median of four content areas. Five of the six states specifying only two content areas included language arts and mathematics. One of the states with 10 content areas included standards linked to general curriculum areas of math and language arts, and expanded the standards to include four related language arts and six related math standards. The

other state that featured 10 content areas included three academic and seven functional skill areas.

Skills and Knowledge Measured with Alternate Assessment Systems

The first step in examining the skills and knowledge measured in states' alternate assessment systems was reviewing the information to determine whether the performance indicators provided by states were actual items (either required or from which items could be selected), or whether they were examples of items (that were optional or could be replaced with teacher- or locally-developed items). Fifty-seven percent (n= 24) provided optional examples of performance indicators, while 29% (n=12) provided actual skills to be assessed. Performance indicators for 10% (n=6) of the states could not be considered as either examples to select from or actual assessment items. The bottom layers that typically represented the performance indicators for four of these six states were too broad to be considered as assessment items (e.g., "receptive communication," accessing information"). The other two states provided performance indicators that may or may not be a part of the alternate assessment. The alternate assessment for these two states consisted of the same activity for all students regardless of which performance indicators were actually being taught to the individual students.

Next, performance indicators in each state's system were coded as functional, academic, functional academic (academic skills adapted to functional situations), or some combination. Fourteen percent of states included only academic performance indicators, 21% included only functional performance indicators, and 19% included only functional academic performance indicators (see Table 1). Almost one-third (31%) of states included a combination of both academic and functional performance indicators.

States' performance indicators for each content area were tallied, avoiding duplicate items that might appear in more than one content area to the extent possible. The range and median number of performance indicators in each domain across states are displayed in Table 2. More than three-fourths (76%) of states' alternate assessment systems include performance indicators in mathematics, while slightly fewer (71%) include language arts indicators. The number of academic performance indicators ranged from 3 to 2,350. One-third of states included performance indicators in the vocational or career domains. Less than one-fourth of states included performance indicators in each of the other functional domains (communication, personal and home management, social and emotional, health, recreation and leisure, community, motor, independent living, and self-determination). The number of functional performance indicators included in states' alternate assessment systems ranged from 2 to 334. Two states do not measure students' performance in specific academic or skill areas; rather, they organize their standards based on students' *level of performance* (independent, supported, or participatory).

Besides the content areas described above, states' alternate assessment systems were reviewed to determine what specific behavior or level of performance was being measured. Forty of the 42 states provided information on the criteria used to score the alternate assessments. More than two-thirds of states (69%) measured student mastery or progress (see Table 3). Sixty percent measured the level of independence with which the student performs the skill. Fewer than half of states (43%) measured generalization of the target behavior to other settings or with other individuals. Roughly one fifth of states (19%) measured the appropriateness of the skill (e.g., age appropriateness, meaningfulness), the extent to which the skill was inclusive, or self-

determination embedded within the skill. Only 17% of states measured the extent to which the alternate assessment item is linked to state standards.

Scoring of Alternate Assessments

Sixty-five percent of the states (n=26) included more than one criterion in determining the alternate assessment score, while 35% (n=14) used only one criterion. The states that used only one criterion measured progress or level of independence. Half of the states (n=13) that used multiple criteria to score alternate assessments created a separate rubric for each criterion. Seven of the 13 states measuring multiple criteria in a single rubric combined progress with either generalization or level of independence. Another three states combined progress, generalization, and level of independence into one rubric.

Each state's alternate assessment system was also reviewed to determine the methods for determining student scores. Descriptions of the methods used to rate student performance and calculate the scores were analyzed. The vast majority of states (90%) used some type of rubric to score student performance. The number of points on the rubrics ranged from 3 points (5% of states) to 8 points (2%), with a median of 4 points (48%). Four states (10%) used a combination of rubrics with different numbers of points (e.g., some rubrics used a 4-point scale while other rubrics in the same alternate assessment used a 5-point scale). One state used a rubric in which the points on the scale were determined by the individual IEP team; the remaining states used standardized rubrics across all students participating in alternate assessments. Four states that used scoring rubrics linked the points on the scales to level of performance (e.g., growth since benchmark; percent mastery of criteria). The remaining rubrics were either holistic or analytic ratings, with descriptors assigned to each numeric value on the scale.

Three states with assessments based on rubrics used multiple raters or observations to determine students' scores. The remaining states that used rubrics used only one rater at one observation point. Alternate assessment scores in states using rubrics were typically determined by a combination (e.g., sum or average) of rubric scores for different items or content areas. One state that used rubrics to score student performance included the results of a parent survey and a pre-determined activity to determine each student's total alternate assessment score.

Three states (7%) did not use a rubric to score their alternate assessments. One of these states determined a total score according to the percentage of IEP objectives on which the student met criteria. Another state used a paper and pencil test in which the percent of items answered correctly was compared to the previous year's performance to determine the student's score. The third state allowed individual teachers to develop their own system for determining student progress.

Discussion

The 1997 IDEA amendments require assessing students' performance on skills that are aligned to the general curriculum. Most states are trying to understand how to develop assessments that access the general curriculum and increase expectations for students with severe disabilities in inclusive settings. The states included in this study have developed various systems to address the IDEA requirements. In the majority of states assessments are linked back to the state standards or extended to alternate assessments. The number of steps between the standards and the performance indicators differ from state to state. Most states are measuring academic domains; however, 28% of states either measured only functional skills or did not provide enough specific information to determine what was being measured. Almost all states used some

form of rubric to measure student progress, typically mastery or progress (69%) or level of independence (60%).

Academic Focus

Revising curriculum to increase expectations is consistent with the curriculum work of the last two and a half decades in this field as shown in Table 4. The focus on functional curriculum occurred concurrent with increased expectations for life in the community (Brown, Nietupski, & Hamre-Nietupski, 1976). Adding a focus on social inclusion complimented efforts for inclusion in general schools and classes while still teaching functional skills in these contexts (Billingsley, Gallucci, Peck, Schwartz, & Staub, 1996). Emphasizing self-determination accompanied increased expectations that student could "take charge" of their lives and learn through choice making and goal setting (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). Typically this choice making and goal setting relate to daily routines (Brown, Belz, Crosi, & Wenig, 1993). The new hope is that students will learn more academic skills than once expected. Although there has been a body of research on teaching functional academics (Browder & Snell, 2001), extended standards may go beyond these basics to address more academic content. As such, there is little research to guide this endeavor. Even the concept of "access skills," using functional skills in the context of a general education activity, has only emerging research (Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994).

The trend toward defining alternate assessment based on academic standards is far outpacing demonstrations of how to help students achieve these skills. The solution may not be to hold back on the concept of extended standards, but to promote research on access to the general curriculum by students with severe disabilities. When experts and stakeholders embraced the concept of using functional curriculum in the late 1970s, research on teaching functional skills proliferated in the next decade (Nietupski, Hamre-Nietupski, Curtis, & Shrikanth, 1997).

When educators became enthusiastic about social inclusion, research also increased in this area (Nietupski et al., 1997). In contrast research focusing on functional academics declined in the 1990s. Research is urgently needed on how to teach modified academic skills to students with severe disabilities and on how to access the general curriculum through functional skills.

Functional Focus

It is interesting that four states continue to maintain a functional focus with no links to state standards and several others maintain the functional organization of their alternate assessment while providing these links. What may compete with shifting to the use of academic domains for the alternate assessment is the strong commitment the field has had to the concepts of functionality and self-determination. We do not yet know if focusing on extended standards will promote the ultimate goal of increased community access. For example, Kleinert and Kearns (2001) did not find a relationship between outcome on the alternate assessment and post-school outcomes. The worry is that trying to find ways to access the general curriculum and document progress through the alternate assessment may distract educators from teaching functional skills. The value of self-determination also leads educators to question whether it is appropriate to try to fit students into state standards versus expanding state standards to meet the needs of all students. Educators may also worry that the focus on accountability may create setbacks for inclusion unless we maintain a focus on the students' membership in the learning community (Ford et al., 2001). Future research is needed to identify stakeholders' attitudes about the curricular impact of alternate assessment. Such research could help clarify why some states have converted to standards-based alternate assessments and others have retained a functional focus.

In a related study (Browder et al., 2002), experts nominated states for good access to general curriculum. The nominated states included both ones that used an extended standards

approach and ones that linked back from a functional curriculum. Using academic or functional domains as the conceptual framework for the alternate assessment may be less important than what actually gets tested and taught. Having teachers provide documentation of progress in a category like math when they have the freedom to decide what skills actually get measured (as most states allow), does not guarantee that what the student actually learns is math. Only a small percentage of states (17%) determine whether the documented skills actually relate to state standards. Without this documentation, there is no way to validate that alternate assessments actually measure students' progress in attaining of state standards.

Specificity of Performance Indicators

Another finding in the current study was that states vary widely in the level of specificity they offer teachers as examples of performance indicators. In some states these are teachable examples that might easily be translated into IEP goals. In others, they are broad standards that require teachers to interpret how to apply them to students with severe disabilities. In most states, the indicators are examples versus the specific skills to be assessed. Providing examples, rather than specifics, is consistent with the curriculum philosophy that skills for students with severe disabilities must be individualized through the IEP process (Knowlton, 1998; Wehmeyer et al., 2001). In contrast, providing specific skills to assess takes the teacher guesswork out of completing the alternate assessment.

Similarly, providing specific performance indicators as examples in states where teachers do create the content of the alternate assessment gives teachers a clear idea of what is meant by extending the states' standards. Teachers may then be better able to generalize to their students' unique needs. In contrast, specific examples may also prove to be trivial or not true extensions as noted by Ford et al. (2001). Ford et al. propose using foundational skills as extended standards.

These are broader performance indicators that allow for more student individualization and may address more meaningful goals. If a state allows teachers to develop the content of the alternate assessment and offers broad examples, it will be important to provide training in both general curriculum content and how to extend standards. Destefano, Shriner, and Lloyd (2001) demonstrated a method to train teachers to make decisions about students' participation in accountability systems that can serve as a model. Teachers learned about the general education curriculum, requirements of IDEA, and a decision making model for planning participation accommodations. Similarly, teachers conducting alternate assessment need training in general curriculum and making decisions about how to document student progress on state standards.

Performance Expectations

Another important consideration in alternate assessment is what level of performance is expected for students. During the 1990s, many special educators focused primarily on the supports students would need to succeed in inclusive settings. Billingsley and Albertson (1999) emphasized the importance of continuing to teach functional skills while promoting social inclusion in general education. Most states have targeted progress or mastery as the primary indicators of student achievement. Some also reflect the supports focus of the 1990s by considering criteria like whether students are given opportunities for choice and social inclusion. If the alternate assessment is linked to the IEP, setting the expectation of progress or mastery is feasible because the goals have been set based on the students' individual needs and abilities. The challenge with IEP-based alternate assessments is also demonstrating that they link to state standards. Teachers will need additional training in these states to know how to incorporate extended standards into the IEP. In contrast, some states do not link alternate assessment to the IEP but require documentation in the state standards. Again, it may be feasible in such states for

teachers to align these two processes with some training in standards-based IEPs (Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 2001).

To some extent, the expectations for students in the alternate assessment may also be influenced by whether or not this requirement "counts" in school accountability. States that are low stakes or that do not include alternate assessments in their school accountability equations may not be as concerned about whether or not students meet standards. In contrast, in states like Kentucky and North Carolina where the scores are factored into school accountability equations, the issue of what is expected for students in the alternate assessment is a critical issue. In Kentucky, schools that have overall high scores also tend to have high scores on the alternate assessment (Turner, Baldwin, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2000).

Conclusions

Alternate assessment is requiring educators to think seriously about what we expect students with severe disabilities to learn. One special education administrator said, "Students with severe disabilities have been on the ball team for a while, but with alternate assessment it is their turn to bat."[2] Now we have to decide what we expect the student to do at bat. Do we expect the student to hit the ball and run the bases (same standard)? Do we expect the student to have some approximation of hitting the ball and running the bases by using a tee or having a runner (adapted standard)? Or is it okay if the student has an alternative expectation like friendships with teammates (social goal) or dressing in a uniform (functional goal)? Should we focus instead on what we provided to get the student ready to bat like having a uniform and choosing a bat (supports)? Currently alternate assessments across America reflect all of these approaches. Some lean more towards trying to get the student to do an approximation of what all students do (hit the ball), others are focused on other curricular values. We anticipate that the years ahead will

hold important debates about what it means for schools to be accountable for educational outcomes for students with severe disabilities.

[2] Dr. Nellie Aspel, Principal, North Shelby High School

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Table 1

Percent of States Including Combinations of Academic; Functional, and Functional Academic Items in Their Alternate Assessment Systems

Type(s) of Items	% of States (N=42)
Academic only	14%
Functional only	21%
Functional academic only	19%
Academic and functional	31%
Academic and functional academic	5%
Functional and functional academic	2%
Unknown	7%

Table 2

Number Of Performance Indicators In Each Academic And Functional Content Area

Content area	Number of states	Range of number of indicators	Median number of indicators
Academic			
Language Arts	30	6 – 2,350	75
Math	32	5 – 1,125	58
Science/Technology	17	6 – 408	64
Social Studies	15	6 – 840	84
Other Academic	5	5 – 122	59
Functional Academic	5	3 – 224	6
Functional			
Voc/Career	14	3 – 334	49
Communication	10	2 – 177	32
Personal/ Home Management	7	2 – 249	24
Social/Emotional	8	2 – 76	26
Health	6	20 – 98	55
Rec/Leisure	6	2 – 142	11
Community	5	2 – 198	24
Motor	5	2 – 148	36
Independent Living	3	63 – 156	112
Self-determination	3	15 - 42	28
Other	4	6 – 95	61

Table 3

Percent of States Measuring Different Aspects of Student Performance

Measured	% of states
Mastery or progress	69
Level of independence	60
Generalization	43
Age-Appropriateness (meaningful)	19
Inclusion	19
Self-determination	19
Link to standard	17
Other (e.g. portfolio quality, connection to IEP)	12
Varies or is unknown	5

Table 4. *Curriculum Trends in Educating Students with Severe Disabilities*

Era	Philosophical Changes	Curricular Focus	Additive or Replacement
First federal mandate for services for children with disabilities 1975	Students with severe disabilities can be educated by the public school system. Use "mental age" to plan program.	**Developmental Model**: Adaptations of infant/ preschool curriculum for students with severe disabilities ages 6-21 years	Filled void of no curriculum in prior services which were day care or custodial
Creation of community services; deinstitutionalization 1975-late 1980s	Individuals with severe disabilities can live and work in the community. Educational programs need to promote community access.	**Functional Curriculum:** Use the major domains of life (vocational, home, community, leisure) as the foundation for curriculum.	Replaced Developmental Model with criticism of skills that were "not age appropriate" or "not functional"
Inclusion in typical schools and general educational classrooms Mid 1980s-1990s	Students with severe disabilities should be "full members" of their schools with opportunities to form friendships with nondisabled peers.	**Social Inclusion.** Focused some on social skills to be acquired like communication and turn taking, but also on opportunities to interact versus skills to learn.	Additive- students still learned functional skills in general class, but sometimes with more emphasis on the social interactions than skill acquisition.
1990s Self advocacy movement begins to have more influence on services for students with severe disabilities	Students with severe disabilities have the right to be self determined, for example, to make choices about their daily lives.	**Self-Determination:** Person centered planning to create inclusive opportunities & honor preferences; instruction in skills like choice making, goal setting.	Additive- Students could set goals and make choices about functional activities like where to work or what to wear. Sometimes replacement when focus only on creating opportunities versus teaching skills.
1990s to present Broader movement within special education to access the general curriculum; School reform movement and focus on accountability	Students with severe disabilities should have the opportunity to learn the general curriculum. Schools can be held accountable for all students progress on state standards.	**General Curriculum Access:** Selecting skills using general curriculum content areas like reading, math, science, social studies. Using different levels of performance or linking functional skills for this access.	Probably additive, but may change the conceptual framework for curriculum. For example, will future textbooks in severe disabilities have chapters that go beyond functional academics on access to science, social studies, math, reading?

Figure 1

Example of an Alternate Assessment with Two Layers Linking State Standards to Performance Indicators

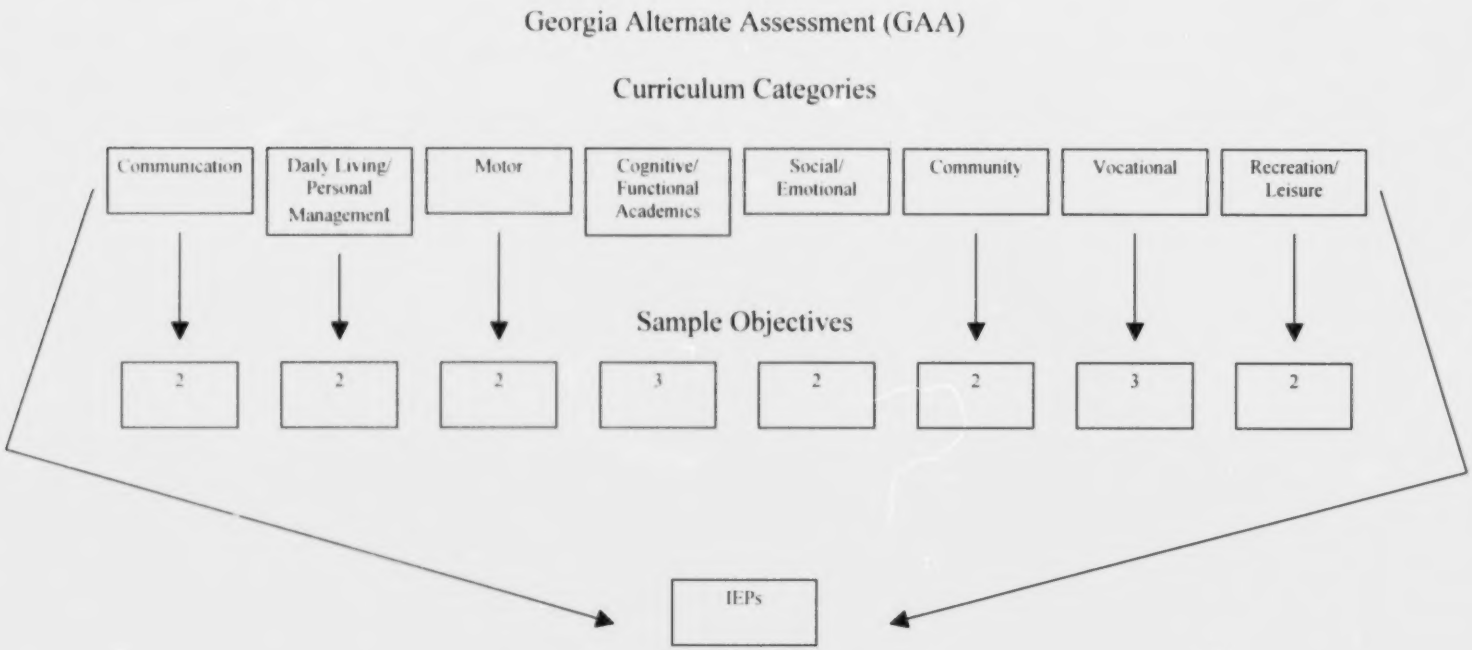


Figure 2

Example of an Alternate Assessment with 10 Layers Linking State Standards to Performance Indicators

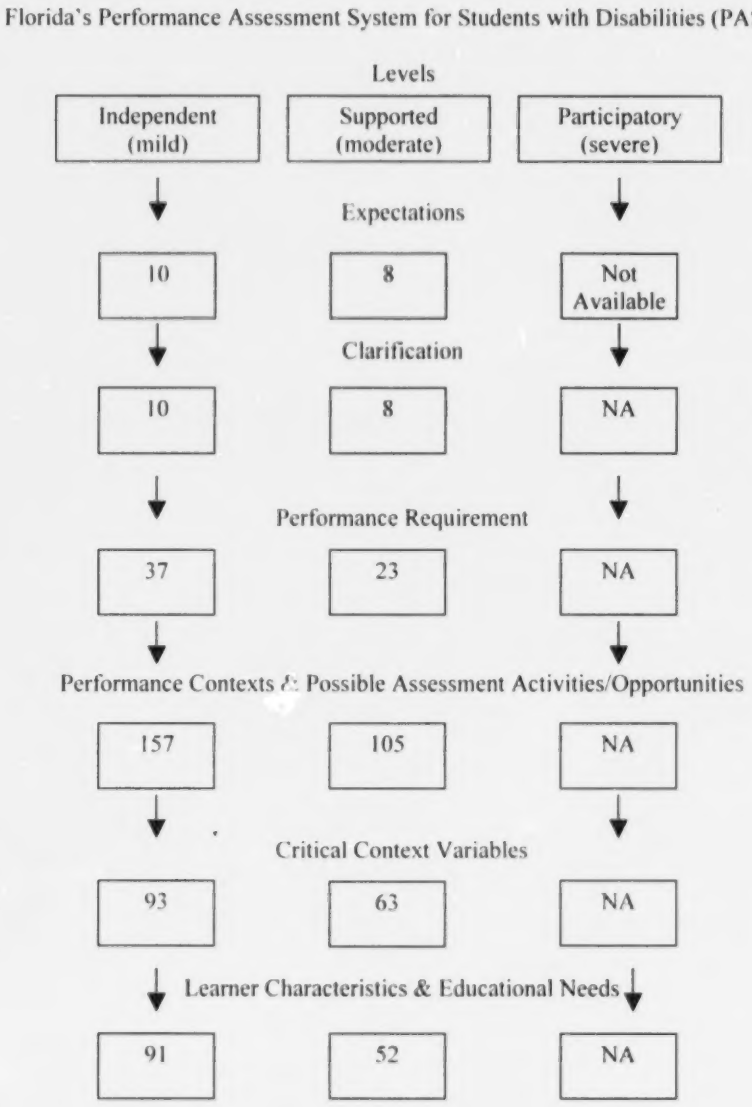


Figure 3

Example of an Alternate Assessment with

Five Layers Beginning with General Curriculum Content Areas

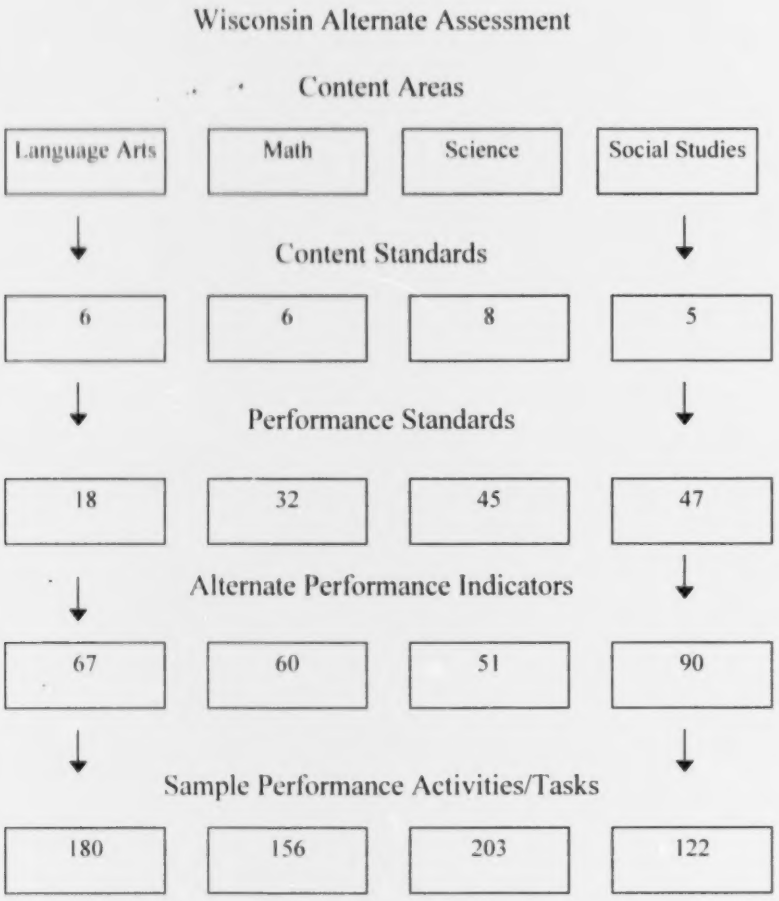


Figure 4

Example of an Alternate Assessment with Five Layers Beginning with Functional Areas

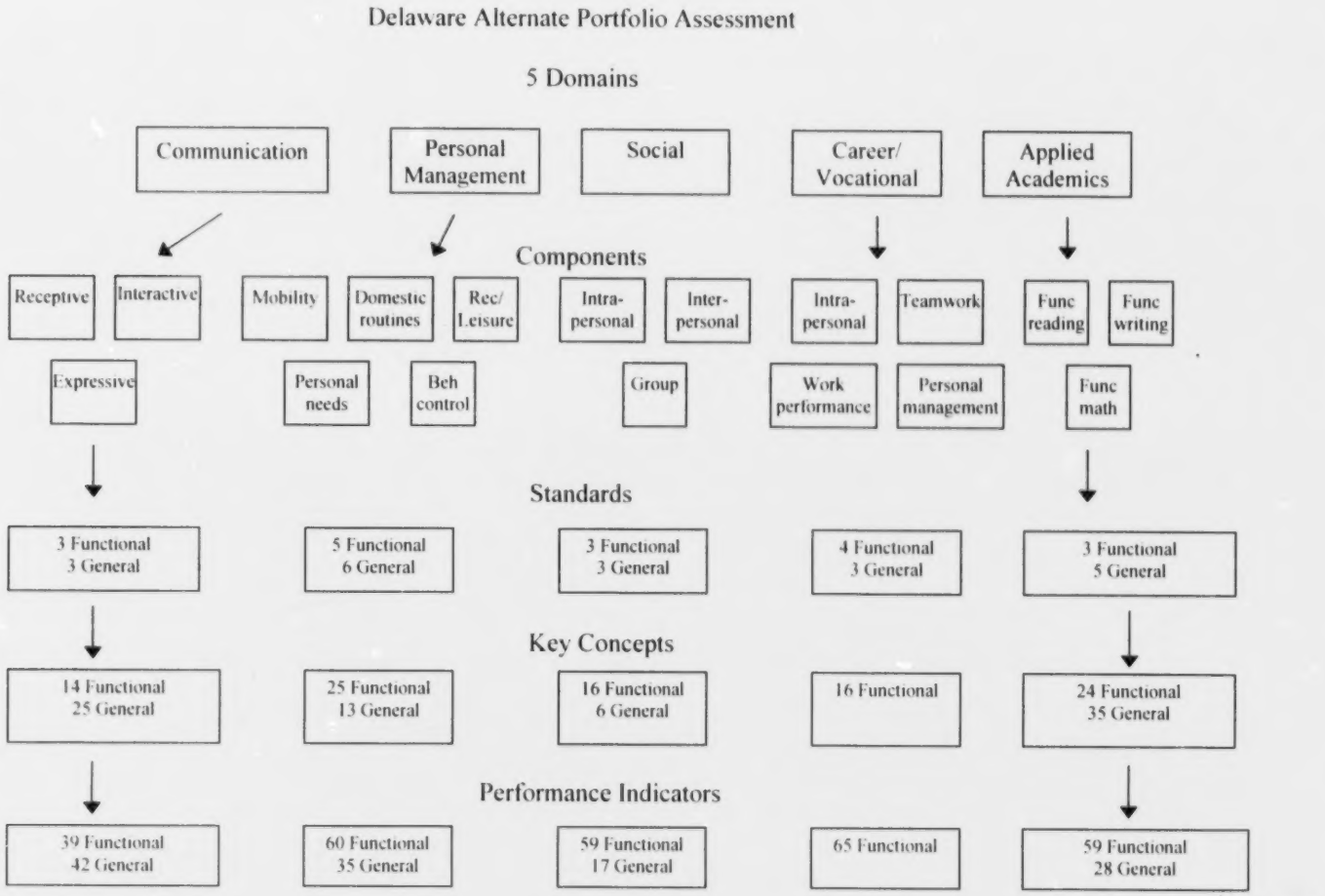


Figure 5

Example of an Extended Curriculum Alignment

South Dakota Statewide Team-Led Alternate Assessment and Reporting System (STAARS)

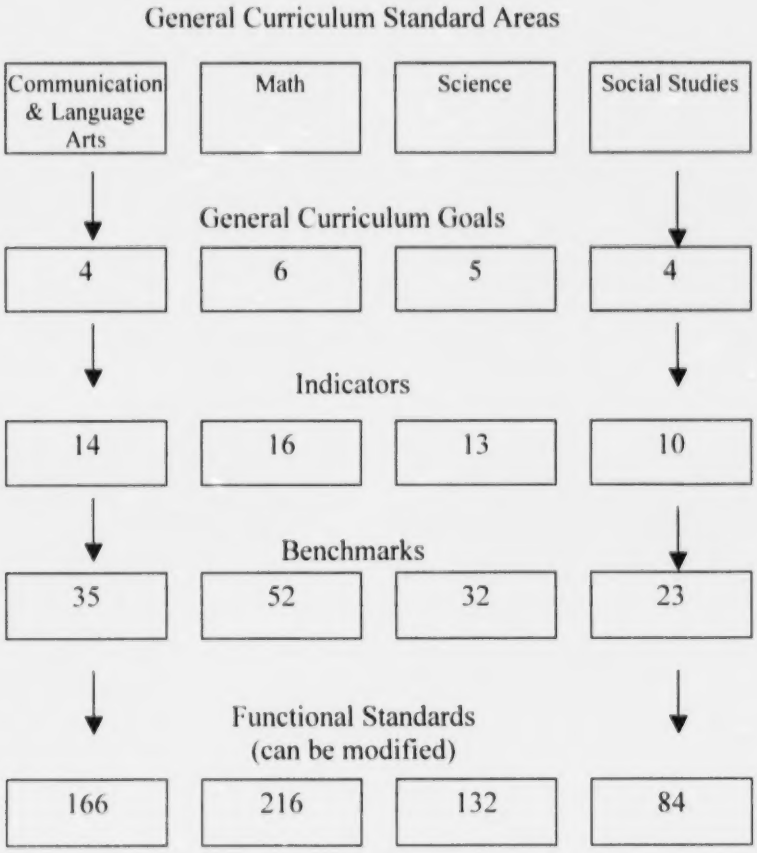


Figure 6

Example of a Link Back Curriculum Alignment

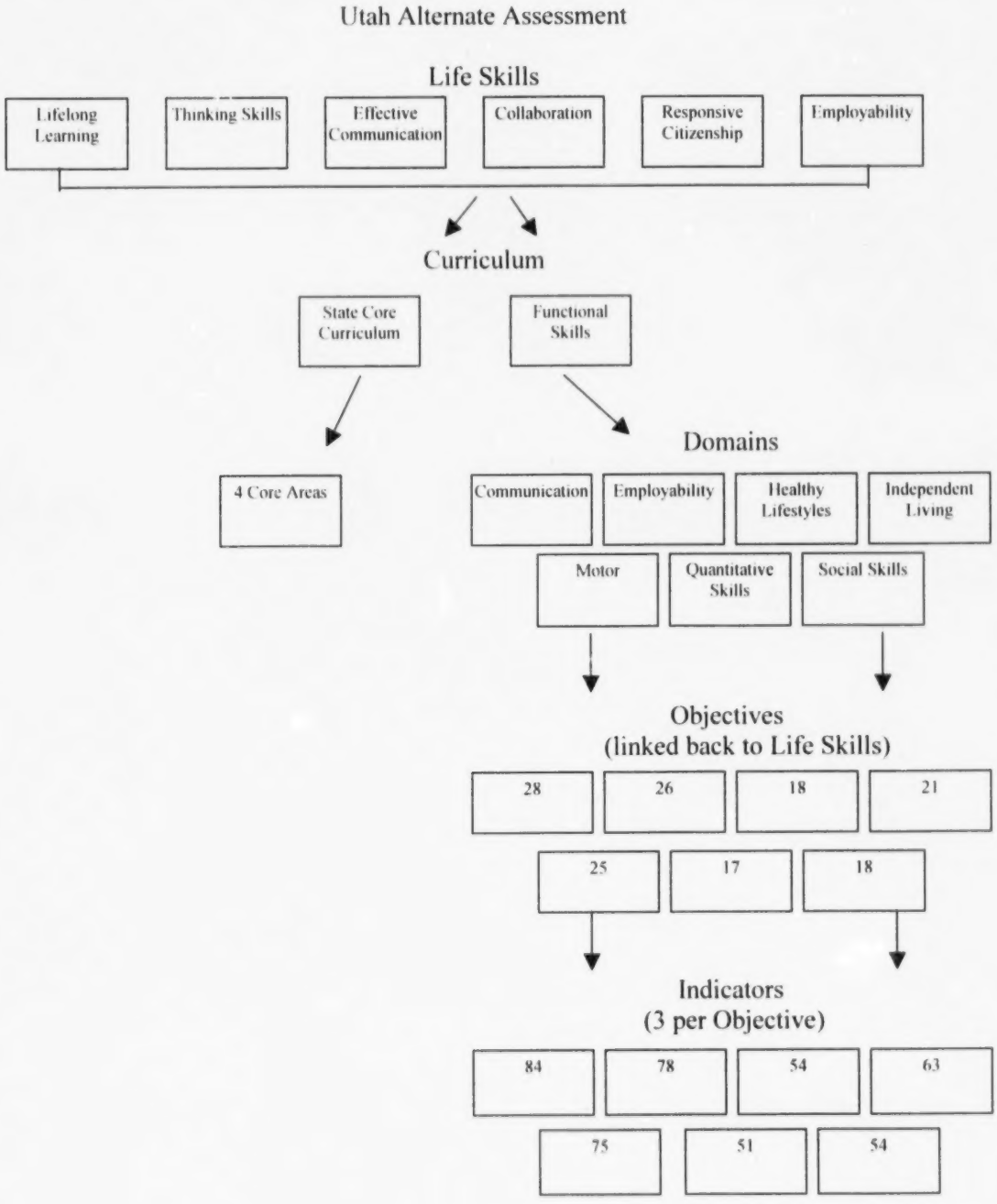


Figure 7

Example of an Extended and Functional Curriculum Alignment

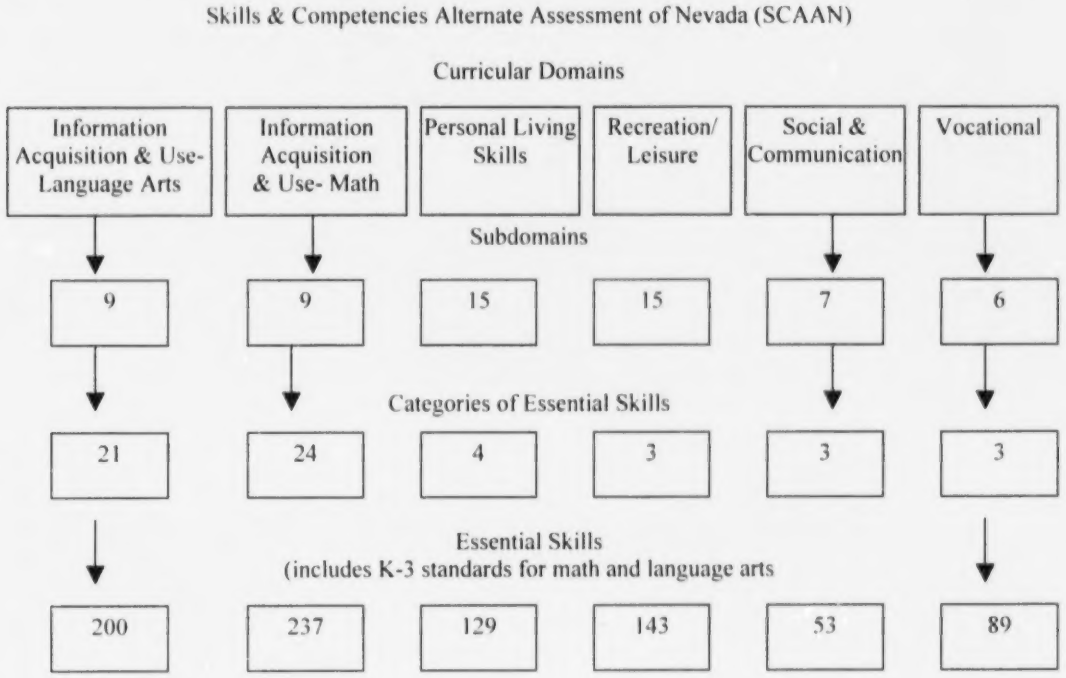
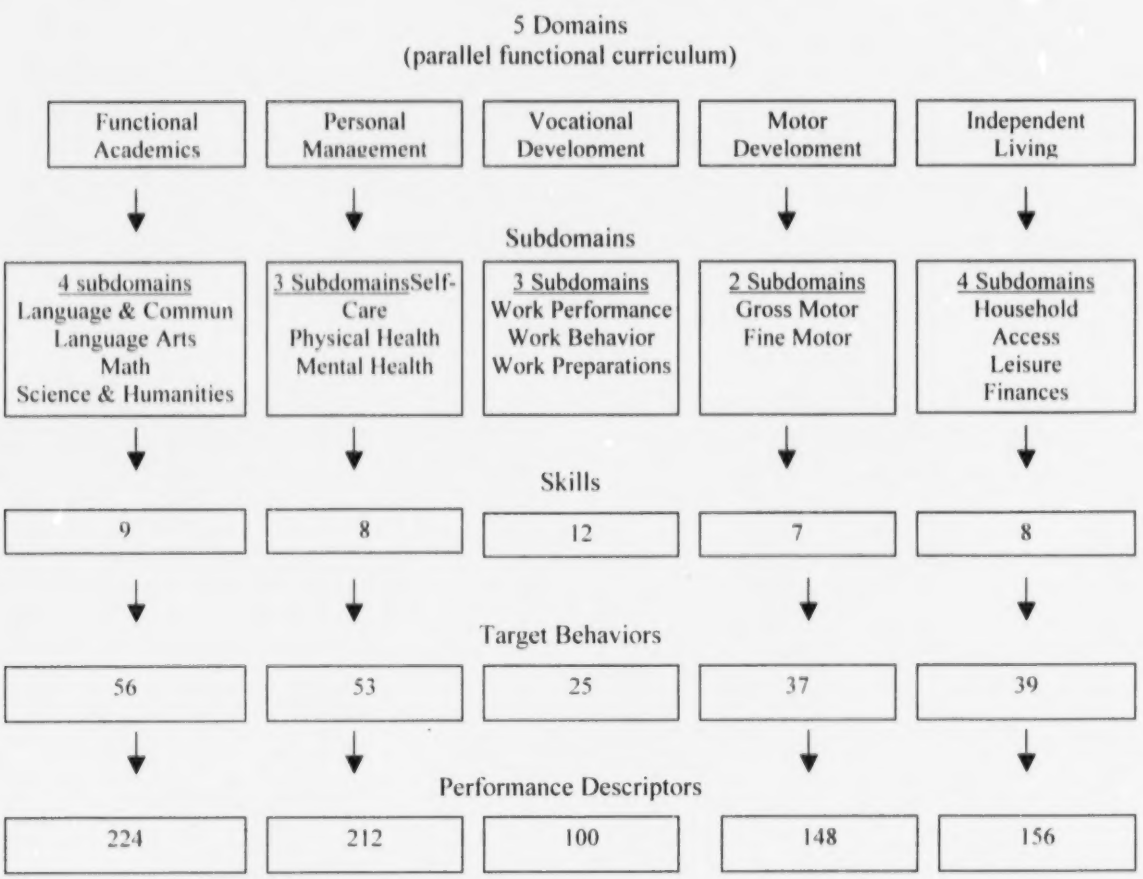


Figure 8

Example of a Functional Curriculum Alignment

Leading Educational Achievement through Rigorous Nebraska Standards (LEARNS) – Alternate Assessment
(functional curriculum parallel to general curriculum)



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